

# Protecting America's Plant Resources and Ecosystems

An outbreak of an exotic plant pest or weed in the United States could seriously damage American agriculture or ecosystems. People entering the United States are often surprised when told that their "one little piece of fruit" can cause serious damage. In fact, one piece of fruit may contain many pests, often microscopic, and one carelessly discarded item can devastate American crops. For example, it is quite likely that a traveler carried in the wormy fruit that brought Mediterranean fruit flies to California in 1979. The 3-year fight to eradicate this pest cost more than \$100 million. Another instance is the eradication of a voracious forest pest from Russia, known as the Asian gypsy moth. In November 1997, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, eradicated the pest from North Carolina in a 3-year program that cost more than \$20 million.

Early detection, regulation, and eradication of exotic plant pests and weeds within the United States are the responsibility of APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program. Within PPQ, the Pest Detection and Management Programs (PDMP) staff ensures adequate exotic plant pest and weed surveillance within the United States through the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program. PDMP also provides expertise on exotic plant pests and maintains a high level of emergency preparedness through the use of pest risk assessments and pathway studies. PPQ provides the needed resources to respond to and eliminate new introductions of exotic plant pests and weeds in the United States and its territories.

## Guarding Against the Introduction of Exotic Plant Pests and Weeds

Information concerning exotic pests that threaten U.S. agriculture has been the focus of APHIS' risk-based decision-making efforts in recent years.

The most effective way to prevent the establishment of exotic pests or weeds in the United States is by preventing their introduction. In order to effectively protect against such pest introductions, PPQ needs

the help of importers, the traveling public, the transportation industry, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments.

Anyone entering the United States or importing products from other countries should adhere to the following basic tips to prevent exotic plant pest or weed introduction in the United States:

### DO:

- **DECLARE** any meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, animals, and plant and animal products you are carrying when entering the United States.
- Pack items where they will be readily accessible.
- Make sure to check "yes" for Questions 11 and 12 on the U.S. Customs Declaration Form.
- Follow the instructions of the Federal officers in the inspection area.
- Refer to the APHIS permit unit's Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits) or call the central office at (877) 770-5990 before traveling to or importing agricultural products from foreign countries.

### DON'T:

- Bring prohibited foreign agricultural products or propagative materials back to the United States because it creates a threat to American agriculture and may result in clearance delays and possible fines.
- Import agricultural products or propagative materials without first checking with PPQ concerning permit, inspection, and certification requirements.
- Bring or import biological materials to the United States without first applying for a permit from PPQ.

## Detecting Exotic Plant Pests and Weeds

When an exotic plant pest or weed is introduced, it is important that it is detected early so that eradication or control actions can be quickly implemented. Early detection is the goal of the CAPS program. CAPS is a cooperative program that combines the skills and resources of PPQ with those of State agricultural organizations and universities. CAPS cooperators continually conduct pest surveys throughout the United States using tools such as traps, plant and soil sampling, sweep nets, and visual surveys. Collected pests are identified and the information is entered into the database known as the National Agricultural Pest Information System (NAPIS). CAPS effectiveness can be greatly enhanced with the support and watchful eyes of the general public.

## How the General Public Can Help Detect New Introductions

During your normal daily routine, be alert for indicators of new plant pests or weeds. Contact your State plant health director or your State plant regulatory official (visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/maps](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/maps) for locations) if you notice any of the following symptoms that are unusual, unexpected, or unexplained:

- An indication of reduced crop yields
- Signs of chlorosis (yellowing) in plants
- Signs of stunted growth of plants
- Indications of dead and/or dying plants (usually in an immediate area)
- Wilting of plants
- Signs of specific plant species being damaged or affected adversely (i.e. all the oaks are dying but the maples in the same area are fine)
- Signs of severe damage to leaves and stems caused by feeding insects
- Dieback in tree limbs
- New or unusual plants replacing other, more common, plants over a wide area.

## How to Prevent the Spread of Exotic Plant Pests or Weeds

- Don't transport wood, logs, limbs, leaves, or firewood from dead or dying trees out of the general area.
- After hiking or camping in wilderness areas, check equipment and clothing, including pant cuffs, and remove any seeds or plant material before returning home.
- Don't ship or transport any host plant material or outdoor household articles from areas under State or Federal plant quarantine without checking with your State plant health director or State regulatory official.
- Purchase plant material from reputable dealers to reduce the possibility of spreading plant pests or weeds.
- Don't dig up wild plants and plant them in your local area.
- Check with your State plant health director or State regulatory official before moving crop harvesting or handling equipment from one State through or into another State.

## Eradication of Exotic Pest Introductions

Once a new exotic plant pest or weed is detected and identified, the Emergency Programs (EP) unit of PDMP initiates actions to implement an eradication and/or regulatory program. EP, along with members of CAPS, begins a delimiting survey to determine the extent of the infestation. During this time, EP, along with Federal, State, and local cooperators, develop

eradication plans, acquire funding, determine and evaluate available control measures, develop quarantine regulations, and consolidate resources. Depending on the extent of the infestation and many other factors, an eradication program can last from several months to several years.

## Additional Information

For additional factsheets, brochures, and publications on detection, surveillance, and regulatory programs, please refer to the following Web sites:  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet\\_fa\\_notice/fs\\_phsafeguard.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet_fa_notice/fs_phsafeguard.html)  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/brotradd.pdf>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/brotraddg.pdf>  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/agr\\_bioterrorism/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/agr_bioterrorism/)  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ep/>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ep/pestdetection/>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/beekeep.pdf>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/detppest.pdf>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/jbposter.pdf>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/ppqinlan.pdf>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/ppqhomfr.pdf>  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/ppqsafe.pdf>  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/pub\\_smuggling.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/pub_smuggling.pdf)  
<http://www.ceris.purdue.edu/napis/>

For more information on how to protect our country's agriculture and ecosystems from exotic plant pests and weeds, contact:

USDA, APHIS, PPQ  
Pest Detection and Management Programs  
4700 River Road, Unit 137  
Riverdale, MD 20737-1236  
Telephone (301) 734-4387 or visit the APHIS  
Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq>.

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